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ABSTRACT

The Northern Arizona University Career Ladder Research and Evaluation Project for teachers implements a procedure for rewarding teachers based on performance levels rather than on years of teaching experience and college credits. Research data is collected each spring, analyzed and fed back to the districts for improvement of key program components. This document presents a "working list" of representative areas of the pilot-test program. Questions are listed under the following areas: (1) research and evaluation; (2) organizational climate; (3) teacher variables; (4) program funding; and (5) attitudes toward change. A list is also provided of review questions regarding career ladder program evaluation which includes questions on: (1) legislative and policy issues; (2) test of assumptions about career ladder programs; (3) analysis of development and change factors; (4) study of career ladder designs; and (5) administration and finance. (JD)

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPONENTS

OF AN EMERGING CAREER LADDER PROGRAM MODEL

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by

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPONENTS
OF AN EMERGING CAREER LADDER PROGRAM MODEL

The Northern Arizona University Career Ladder Research and Evaluation Project has identified key areas crucial to educational program reform and success. As a result of two years of study, there is an emerging model which requires extensive development. Therefore, the remaining years of the pilot-test program will concentrate on securing answers to initial questions as well as those arising as the project progresses.

To accomplish this massive and formidable task, there will need to be considerable input and cooperative effort on the part of all associated leaders, groups and organizations. To serve that end, the project is directly asking for suggestions and support from the Joint Legislative Committee on Career Ladders' Task Force, the Career Ladder Pilot District Network, Career Ladder School Districts, the "Organized Profession," and any other interested individuals or groups.

The listing of study questions below are in no way to be considered complete; some are already being answered by the "annual survey," and some may be found to be inappropriate. The intent is to help direct and mobilize research and evaluation efforts toward establishing the evidence which will support or reject this experimental teacher incentive reform movement on its "true merits." As reported from the Southern Regional Education Board Career Ladder Clearinghouse (1987, December, p. 1),

> One fact is clear. Career ladder and other incentive pay programs are the largest educational experiment in the United States today. Hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent, and hundreds of thousands of teachers and school administrators are part of state and local incentive programs to reward teachers and administrators for doing a better job or for taking on additional responsibilities in schools. Leadership, teacher support, funding, and evaluating programs for outcomes and effectiveness continue to be key points for discussion.

The education profession has a chance to move ahead with the career ladder concept and Arizona's Pilot-Test Districts should be in the forefront of providing the best possible answers and model components. The following is a "working list" of representative areas of need for program evaluation:

Research & Evaluation

What is each CLP district's model or plan for program research and self-evaluation? What level of resources is available to document program development and success?

What is, or was, the "readiness" level of the district in implementation of a career ladder program?

Organizational Climate

What is the district plan for maintenance or improvement in "organizational climate," "psychological environment" or "communication processes?"

Teacher Variables

Professional Attitude. Are high quality teachers seeking out districts because they are a career ladder one (recruitment)? Are teachers remaining in the district due to the CLP (retention)? Are they motivated by the CLP (motivation)?

Involvement & Input. How is each district assuring involvement in the development and and evaluation of the career ladder program?

Teacher Evaluation. Is each performance-based career plan fair and perceived as being fair (reliability and validity)? Are teachers fairly selected and placed on the career ladder program through an adequate bureaucratic structure (manageable time and expense)?

Does the district have enough technical help to develop an adequate evaluation system?

What is the district plan or model for evaluating administrators effects on teacher development?

Is the "organized professional leadership" within the district positive about experimentation with the CLP?

Teacher Development. What are district procedures for teacher development? Is there a planned inservice program? How is the teacher development program working?

Student Achievement. What is the district plan or model for relating teacher performance and student academic achievement? Are there a variety of ways to show scientific (objective and empirical) evidence relating teacher performance and student achievement for each CL teacher?

Are student achievement, administrator and/or performance evaluations used equally to determine superior productivity?

Funding

What is the model (formula) for funding teachers in each career ladder district and what is its success?

Are career ladder programs costing the state and districts an amount which can be supported over the long term, continue to expand the number of teachers and the number of districts?

Change

What are the fundamental changes in the community, district organization and structure and personnel as a result of the career ladder programs?

Are the reactions to change in all related segments positive enough to allow program success?

What are the positive and negative reactions to change and to what degree do they operate in related district and community segments?

Change(continued)

"How much time does it take to develop consensus for a program?" "How much time does it take to determine if a plan is working or achieving its intended goals?" "Will leadership and support be sustained long enough for a fair test to determine if the programs are meeting their intended goals. "(Southern Regional Education Board Career Ladder Clearinghouse, December, 1987)

Do teachers perceive the CLP as competitive ("competition leads to teachers being labeled as [good] or [excellent]")? Do teachers see themselves as fitting on a range of competencies or do they all see themselves (a mind-set) as being alike?

Are there plans for change in the original teacher evaluation model (or has there been)?

Are there changes in rewarding excellence? Are there changes in "conversion from a [top down] system to one with teachers making more decisions about teaching? Are burdens of paperwork and non-instructional duties being relieved so that teachers can spend more time teaching and counseling students?

What is the level of understanding and support of the State Board and State Department of Education toward the CLP?

It is suggested for those interested in the development of career ladder programs should review, expand and/or refine these and other questions, cooperatively implement the study of essential ones, and come to a summative conclusion about whether the CL concept is necessary and feasible. If it is found to be a positive reform, those involved will need to clearly communicate the specific ingredients of success?"

On the following page one may review questions regarding CL program evaluation which the project developed in 1986. While this listing has some duplication in those questions above, there are some issues which are not covered in the previous listing, also, the issues should all be relevant to our current evaluation needs.

Reference

Cornett, L. (Ed.). (1987, December). Career Ladder Clearinghouse. by the Southern Regional Education Board. Atlanta, Georgia.

Career Ladder Research Questions

I. **Legislation & Policy Issues**

A. Do the Legislative Guidelines for Career Ladder Programs (CLP) meet the needs for effective program implementation?

B. Is a single career ladder model appropriate for all situations?

C. Should each district be allowed to develop specific career ladder components which meet the needs of the local environment?

II. **Test of Assumptions**

A. Do CLPs improve teacher performance?

B. Do CLPs improve student academic achievement?

C. What is the effect of CLPs on teacher morale? Is the program rewarding to teachers? Is differentiating responsibilities and corresponding salary adjustments challenging to teachers?

D. Do CLPs allow effective use of teaching staff through identification of teaching competencies, talents and abilities?

E. What is the effect of CLPs on recruiting, retention and motivation of high quality teachers? Do CLPs cause careers in education to become more attractive? Does CLP promotions cause greater retention of competent teachers?

F. Is the structure, organization and school environment unified and strengthened as a result of implementation of CLPs?

G. Does the CLP provide incentives on a long term (professional career) basis? What are CLP incentives and are they adequate to overcome risks involved?

H. What is the effect of CLPs in relation to on-the-job staff development?

I. Do CLPs have any effect on teacher education institutions?

III. **Analysis of Development & Change Factors**

A. Is the level of readiness, experience and understanding adequate in CLPs to effect adequate change for success?

B. Have all interests (or "stakeholders") been involved in the CLP decision-making processes?

C. What is the effect of CLPs on the role of school principals?

IV. **Study of Career Ladder Designs**

A. What is the nature of CLP levels and variations between levels? How many? What is the title descriptor? Are there intermediate ranks between levels? Are there level descriptors of function? Are competencies delineated for each level?

B. What is the nature of staff differentiation?

C. What is the criteria for advancement from one level to another? What training requirements exist? What are the conditions for increased responsibilities? What are the contingencies for status, prestige, privilege and greater authority?

D. What is the nature of teacher evaluation? Who evaluates? On what basis are promotions or demotions determined? What is the nature of recommendations & decision making?

E. What is the CLP's salary ranges and differentials?

F. What is the nature of application for entering a CLP and timelines for movement from one level to another?

G. What are the special provisions in the CLP for specialists, e.g., library, media, counselor, speech, reading, exceptional children, etc.

H. Are there limitations in the number of teachers being allowed to move from one level to another? If so, what are the limitations?

I. Is the CLP voluntary or involuntary?

J. Are there legal problems as a result of CLPs? If so, what are they?

V. **Administration & Finance**

A. What is the nature of local and state monetary support?

B. What is the nature of teacher evaluation costs?

C. What is the nature of changes in management and cost involved?

D. What are budgetary requirements to meet projected salaries of teaching personnel?

Conclusion. This concludes a listing of proposed questions which are for study and evaluation of career ladder programs in 15 pilot-test districts in the State of Arizona.